

## Calvin and the Civil Authority.

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nor under what laws you live, since in them the kingdom of Christ does not consist at all." On the other hand, he strenuously contradicts the conclusion that the Christian has therefore nothing to do with civil institutions, is superior to them. The civil and the spiritual kingdoms are not antagonistic to each other; the latter does not render the former superfluous. The Christian does not cease to be a man, and as a man he owes obedience to the civil authority. Nay, the civil authority is as necessary in every community as bread and water, light and air, and its object is not only to maintain order and security, but to maintain true religion (*i.e.*, Calvinism). He magnifies the dignity, the divine right, of the civil authority. The magistrates, *i.e.*, secular rulers, are commissioned by God, represent God, in fact, "as whose substitutes they in a manner act" They exercise judgment in His name, on His behalf. They are the agents of the divine providence. In support of which conclusion, he quotes Paul and refers to Moses, Joshua, David, and the Judges. "Wherefore," he concludes, "no man can doubt that civil authority is in the sight of God not only sacred and lawful, but the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all stations in mortal life." To controvert this conclusion under the pretext of living according to the liberty of the gospel is pure anarchy and absolutely unscriptural, as is proved by further quotations. At the same time he emphasises the necessity of good government. The fact that magistrates are the vicegerents of God, tends, or ought to tend, to the righteous discharge of their sacred calling.

The form of government is for Calvin a matter of secondary importance. It may be monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic, according to the genius of the people, the circumstances of the country. What divine providence permits he would not presume to judge, though he expresses a preference for an aristocracy, pure or modified. Monarchic government, as being dependent on the will of one man, is more liable to error and injustice than one in which the will of several tends to curb and correct one another. "And as I willingly admit that there is no kind of government happier than where liberty is framed with becoming moderation and duly constituted so as to be durable, so I deem those very happy who are permitted to enjoy that form, and I admit that they do